DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 413 677 EA 028 784

AUTHOR	DeMitchell, Todd A.; Fossey, Richard
TITLE	The Limits of Law-Based School Reform. Vain Hopes and False Promises.
ISBN	ISBN-1-56676-482-3
PUB DATE	1997-00-00
NOTE	203p.
AVAILABLE FROM	Technomic Publishing Company, Inc., 851 New Holland Ave., Box 3535, Lancaster, PA, 17604; phone: 717-291-5609; toll-free: 800-233-9936; fax: 717-295-4538; e-mail: marketing@techpub.com; World Wide Web: http://www.techpub.com ($49.95).
PUB TYPE	Books (010) -- Information Analyses (070)
EDRS PRICE	Document Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS	Charter Schools; *Collective Bargaining; *Court Litigation; Educational Equity (Finance); Educational Finance; *Educational Legislation; Educational Malpractice; Elementary Secondary Education; *Public Education; *School Law; *School Restructuring; Sexual Abuse; Student Needs; Teacher Rights; Unions

ABSTRACT

Although the law has been the vehicle for launching school-reform efforts, little attention has been paid to the ways in which legal mechanisms enable or constrain effective school reform; however, law-based school reforms (lawsuits, regulations, statutes, and collective-bargaining provisions) have not changed the fundamental character of the nation's schools. An introduction provides an overview of the history of school reform over the past 2 decades. Part 1 explores how unions and collective bargaining hinder school reform. Part 2 examines some of the legal mechanisms that hold the teaching profession accountable in some fashion to the public. Part 3 asks whether schools are ultimately designed to be workplaces for the benefit of adults or learning places where students' needs come first. One of the chapters discusses the inadequacy of legal remedies for sexual abuse in the schools. Part 4 of the book discusses the limitations of laws, courts, and legislatures in improving conditions in the nation's schools and it reviews three major legal reform initiatives: school-desegregation litigation, the school-funding lawsuits, and the charter-school movement. A table of cases and an index are included. References accompany each chapter. (LMI)

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